

St Laurence Church, Blackmore

Churchyard Management Plan 2025-2027

Prepared by the Eco Church Group

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Executive Summary

This Churchyard Management Plan was commissioned by the Parochial Church Council of St Laurence, Blackmore. It has been researched and prepared by its Eco Church Group (and is considered accurate as of 4 November 2025).

It has been prepared at a time when the PCC is successfully completing an ambitious National Lottery funded Tower renovation project and actively pursuing Eco Church.

It sets out a blueprint for maintenance and new projects over the next 18 months (to Easter 2027) with an aim to improve the use of the churchyard for both people and nature.

The Churchyard is a special place.

There has been no Churchyard Management Plan until now, so its completion follows consultation wider than the Eco Church Group. This includes the Tower Project Team (appointed by the PCC) who are engaging with the local school and Scouts Association on churchyard projects with focus on learning, enjoyment and biodiversity.

This Churchyard Management Plan (referred to as “Plan”) began with an assessment of the churchyard on 10 August 2025. This confirmed that the churchyard has been reactively not proactively managed. While grass areas have been professionally maintained, the remainder has not, because of reliance on occasional working parties comprising of volunteers mainly drawn from the local church congregation. This has resulted in an encroachment of brambles, self-seeded trees etc.

The Churchyard Assessment was immediately valuable for organising the voluntary churchyard tidy scheduled for September 2025. It highlighted tasks that required qualified tree surgeons for safety, such as removing trees and carrying out regenerative pruning of shrubs behind the Millennium Garden of Remembrance.

Prior to completion of this Plan the assessment was repeated on 9 October 2025. This confirmed ash tree seedlings and bramble to be highly dominant species within the churchyard, both of which need to be proactively managed.

It is evident that the time volunteered is insufficient to create a pristine churchyard, if that is what is required – Eco Church would suggest not.

We are keen to engage more with people and to learn more through citizen science.

The Plan will be reviewed on a regular basis. We will use what we have learned to formally review and update it in Easter 2027 to cover the next two or three years.

PCC approved this Plan on 12 November 2025.

This is the online published version.

BLACKMORE CONSERVATION AREA DESIGNATION MAP

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
|  Conservation area boundary |  Green belt |  Tree Preservation Orders |
|  Listed buildings inc. walls |  County wildlife site |  Public right of way |
|  Protected urban open space |  RES Residential | |



Fig.1 Conservation Area boundary and other designations.

Figure 1

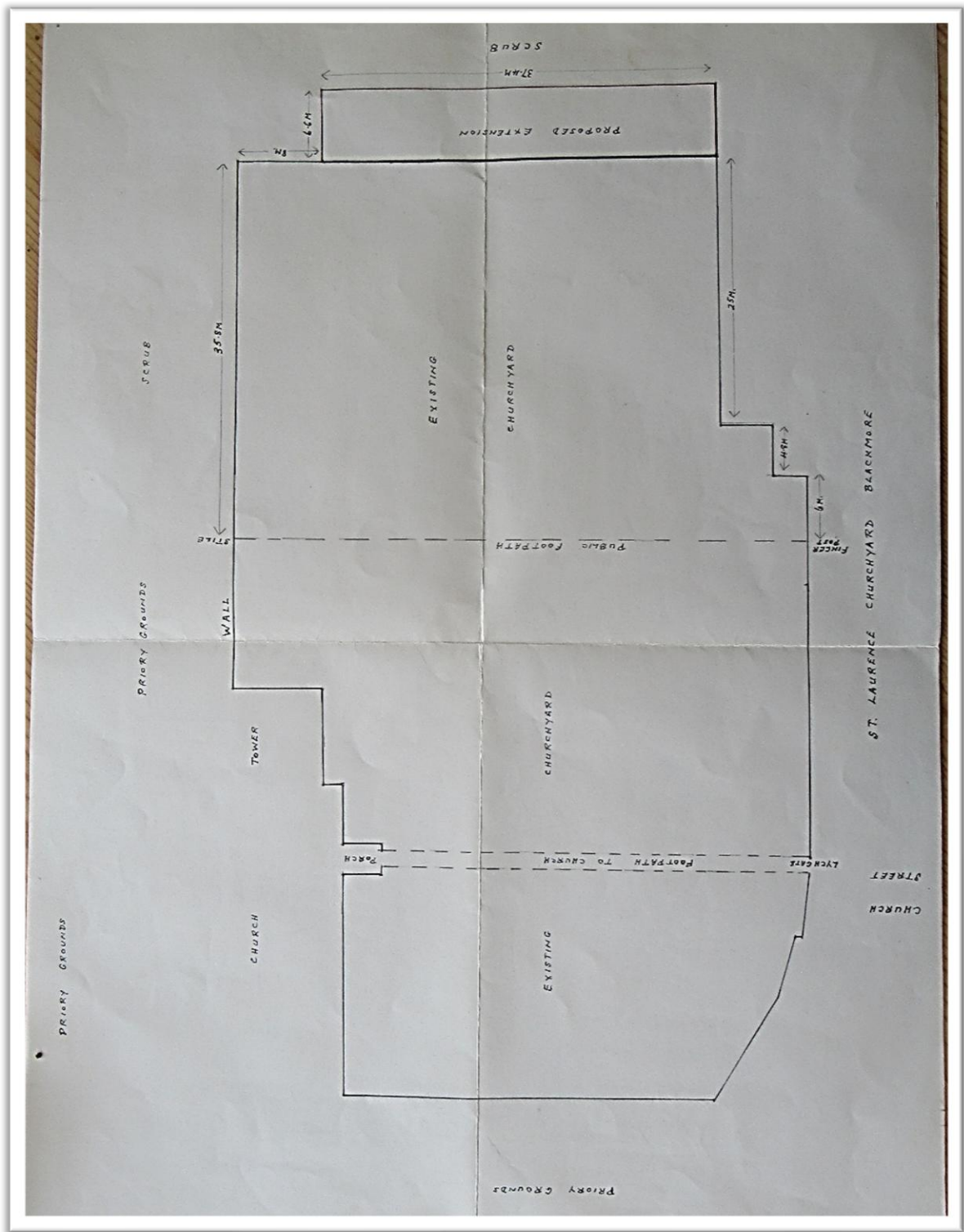


Figure 2: A plan of the churchyard in 1989

Introduction

In 2024 St Laurence PCC signed up to A Rocha's Eco Church designed to challenge and encourage congregations to address the issues of climate change and the biodiversity crisis in God's creation ... where we live: Earth.

The Eco Church survey includes a number of questions across a range of categories.

The Eco Church Group completed the 'Land and Nature' survey during summer 2025. This encourages the formation of a Churchyard Management Plan (see Appendix A – specifically Question 2).

Our churchyard is a special place set aside for the burial of the dead, of local history, a quiet place for people to sit and reflect, and a haven for wildlife.

It is in a rural setting with the end of Church Street to the north, the Church itself to its southeast, the wall of the neighbouring property to the east, and scrub land at its other borders. A 45-mile-long distance path from Ongar to Bradwell, The St Peter's Way, passes along the adjacent church meadow and Church Street. (See Figures 1 & 2.)

The churchyard can be divided into three zones: trisected by the church path, and public footpath both running north to south through the grounds.

Zone 1 to the left, or eastern, side of the church path - on entering through the lychgate - contains the Millennium Garden of Remembrance laid out in 2000. The space within the 'D' shape marked by the path is for cremated remains. There is also an older Garden of Remembrance surrounded by deer-attacked roses.

Zone 2 is the space between the church path and the footpath through the churchyard, the western side furthest from the lychgate includes old and very modern burial headstones.

Zone 3 is that beyond the footpath to the west, which was progressively extended throughout the twentieth century, to 1989, and contains the majority of the monumental memorials.

"The expense for maintaining the churchyard falls upon the Parochial Church Council, which has to raise funds for this purpose as well as the cost of maintaining the church. Few, if any, people donate money for the continuing maintenance of memorials or for the churchyard generally."¹

¹ The Diocese of Chelmsford Churchyard Handbook, para. 7.1, subtitled 'A guide to the rules relating to burial, interment of cremated remains, and other matters relating to churchyards' dated February 2023, refers to the design and placing of memorials (using a CR1 form) so is beyond the scope of this Plan. The Handbook says kerbs around graves is discouraged (para 7.1) and does not allow the use of plastic or artificial flowers other than remembrance poppies, wreaths at Christmas or upon the anniversary of the death of the deceased (para 6.1).

Memorials are intended to be permanent.²

Grass cutting is done regularly under contract with pruning etc undertaken on an organised voluntary basis by church members and friends.

The churchyard remains open but has few burial spaces remaining. If the PCC considered formal closure this may have a significant impact on its ability to future manage the churchyard. (This has not been discussed in this Plan.)

On 10 August 2025, the Eco Church Group walked around the churchyard in order to consider its current state of maintenance, and how it could be made more eco-friendly. The Assessment referred to plans of the churchyard readily available and the Monumental Inscriptions record created by the Essex Society for Family History (in 1997).

The Assessment was repeated on 9 October 2025.

An ecological objective would be to manage the churchyard in such a way as to be nature friendly. The churchyard should not resemble a pristine municipal park or garden with bowling green. Some unkempt areas would be acceptable.

In 2025 the bell tower was repaired supported by the National Heritage Lottery Fund. Funding includes sums set aside for environmental work to the churchyard which includes the creation of a nature trail (see Appendix B).

In September 2025 PCC agreed in principle to: “Quote for additional work ... [with the] possibility that the Friends of St Laurence Blackmore (FOSL) may finance this.”³

At the same meeting in September 2025, it was also reported to PCC, and agreed in principle that, “The gates are rotten; replacing gated and resitting of the fence to level of lychgate would create additional parking (including one extra disabled space). We could perhaps use some of lottery grant for this.”

Both of these actions would require separate PCC approval because these fall outside the items in this Plan.

² The removal or replacement of a memorial requires a Faculty per Handbook, para 8.1.

³ The additional work would include the removal of the precariously leaning silver birch (area 3C), horse chestnut T5 with tree preservation order, and ash tree on fence line (area 2B) plus eradication of bramble through the use of herbicide (area 3A). For more information refer to sections within the body of the report.

Assessment

Zone One: East of Path to Church



Figure 3: Zone One

This is an attractive area which includes two Remembrance Gardens and some of the oldest headstones in the churchyard.

The Millennium Remembrance Garden was designed in 1999 by Sally Player. Illustrated below (Figure 4) is the originally conceived planting scheme which included shrubs along the outer border. This does not appear to have been completed and, over time what shrubs were planted have grown and outcompeted one another.

As a result of the Churchyard Assessment in August 2025 the shrubs were regeneratively pruned by a professional firm of landscapers. The cost of this work was covered by the NLHF grant as part of the work to create a space for a shed.

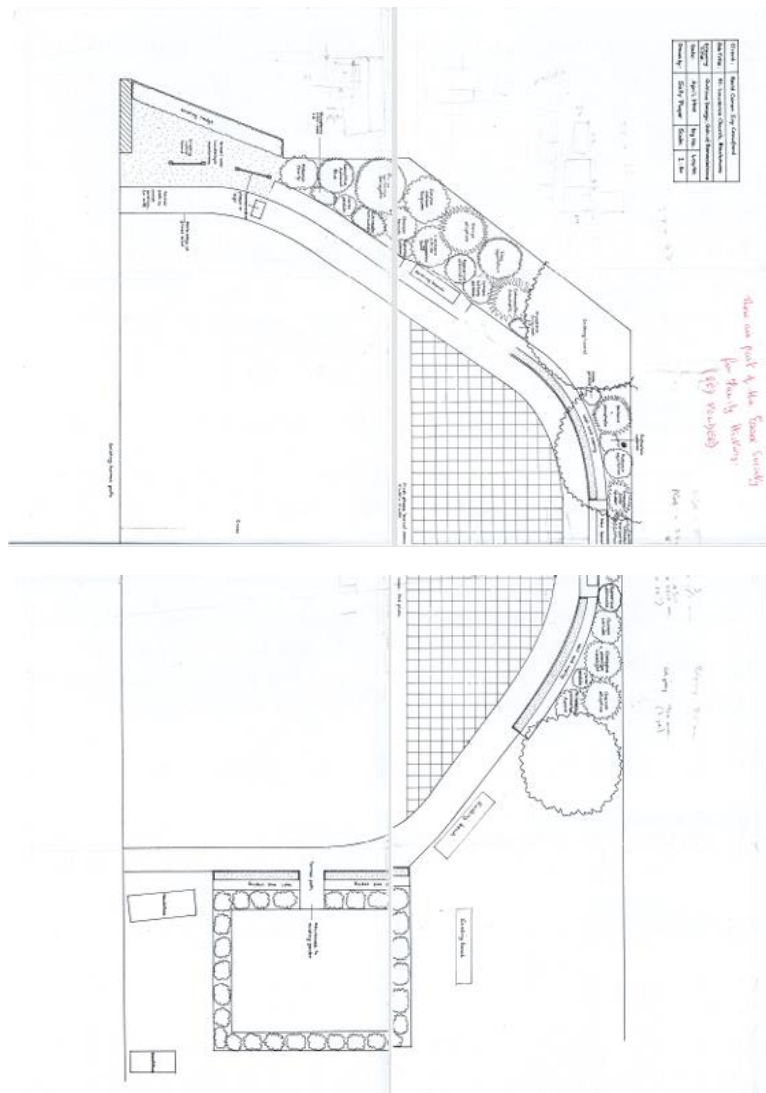


Figure 4: Millennium Remembrance Garden Plan, 1999

Starting at the lychgate the walk assessed the perimeter of Zone One.



Figure 5: View from lychgate showing possible wildflower area and, behind to the right, shrubs which have since been regeneratively pruned (photographed October 2024)

Area 1A

On the left is a grave without inscription (#1 on Monumental Inscriptions plan) and four concrete posts once used for notice boards. The grass area extends behind a tree and adjacent bench (#3: Dines).

There is an old bug hotel on the wall which could be renewed either by fixing to the wall or on posts.

PCC agreed in September 2025 that this area (1A) could be changed to create a wildflower area. Visually this would be very attractive as people leave the churchyard.

Separately, through the Tower Project Team there has been conversations with the Head Teacher at Blackmore Primary School. So far these have focused on how the church could serve the school's National Curriculum interests, although the Head Teacher also expressed an openness to collaborate in the creation of a churchyard Nature Trail.

We have become aware that the Primary School has its own Eco Committee, so a proposal has been made to designate area 1A to the school – and possibly their Eco Committee – for planting.

The area is about 20 metres by 4.5 metres (90m²) so overambitious to plant a wildflower area which will take at least a year to establish with risk of initial failure.

Subsequent thinking is to designate the area immediately behind the hedge for wildflower planting (5.5 metres by 2.5 metres – 13m²) with the remainder (77m²) planted in late autumn 2025 with spring bulbs – daffodils – which will flower in the spring 2026 close to Easter. This would be a quick win with children seeing the immediate effects of their efforts.

The Eco Church Group has investigated how to implement this project (with detail given in Appendix C).

Area 1B

In August 2025, the area behind the two walls of remembrance to the eastern side included self-seeded brambles, bear grass, euonymus, holly, laurel, spiraea, mock orange (philadelphus), and an escaonia tree. The presence of mahonia, further mock orange and many more brambles was observed. These have all since been regeneratively pruned - a horticultural term for radical pruning which although the appearance looks poor in the short term will allow future proper management of the area.

A further assessment in October 2025 revealed that the area includes recently germinated ash tree seedlings and bramble, both of which are undesirable (see Appendix D). To benefit from the regenerative pruning, both species need to be monitored and removed on discovery. On the plus side dog violets were seen in flower on the edge and a primrose plant at ground level and holly and lilac bushes.

Regenerative planning also exposed headstones and footstones which have been placed along the wall prior to the 1997 Monumental Inscriptions Survey (e.g., #4, Stapler, d.1816; #6, Brewster, d.1858-78). The headstone to Caton (#8) can be seen in its original location with small footstone about six feet behind. Most footstones in the churchyard were removed to the wall before 1997 presumably to make mowing easier (but nowadays would be regarded as a health and safety trip hazard).

The original plan for the Millennium Garden of Remembrance intended a bench to be placed between the two walls, facing west. This might be a future consideration. This space has spindle bushes and cotoneaster.

Area 1C



Figure 6: Area 1C stripped to make room for new shed

There was then an overgrown lilac tree (syringa) and buddleia which, since August 2025, has been removed to allow a shed to be placed subject to planning permission in this area (see Appendix B). The shed is proposed to occupy the space behind the two Twogood graves (#17 & #18) and next to the site of a flat headstone to Robert Petchey (#19) in the long grass area.

These are ancient graves. Arthur Mee, the author of ‘Essex’ in ‘The King’s England’ series wrote in 1940: “In the churchyard sleep the two Twogoods from Queen Anne’s time, each with a skull and crossbones on his grave”.⁴ Robert Petchey’s headstone has the oldest recorded date in the churchyard, 1699. It has recently been lifted intact and placed against the wall to the left of a footstone to Burrell (#20a).

The Twogood graves have ivy growing on them. These were correctly trimmed at the roots when the Churchyard Tidy happened. Likewise, any other ancient and important graves should be pruned in the same way (see Appendix G)

⁴ Mee, Arthur. The King’s England. Essex (Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1940) p37

Area 1D

The long grass area to the existing small shed includes brambles and, closest to the small shed, self-seeded ash and horse chestnut sapling (both of which were removed in September 2025), and established yew and laburnum trees.



Figure 7: Small Shed and broken Compost Bin

Along the wall are headstones and footstones mentioned above.

There is a broken compost bin by the small shed and evidence of grass clippings strewn in this area.

This area (1D) requires the removal of bramble and self-seeded trees to retain the long grass area.

Area 1E

Rainwater from the church roof comes down pipes and into a soakaway at the foot of the wall. It allows rainwater to seep into the ground over time. These stones are becoming choked with weeds so reduces its effectiveness.

The soakaway needs to be cleared of weeds.

Collecting rainwater in butts has been suggested by a member of the Eco Church Group with proposal discussed briefly by that Group. Looking at the archives, it seems that this was proposed to PCC c.2009 but never came to fruition. Its feasibility requires further research with a view to it becoming a project after Easter 2027.

Zone Two: Between Church Path and Public Footpath

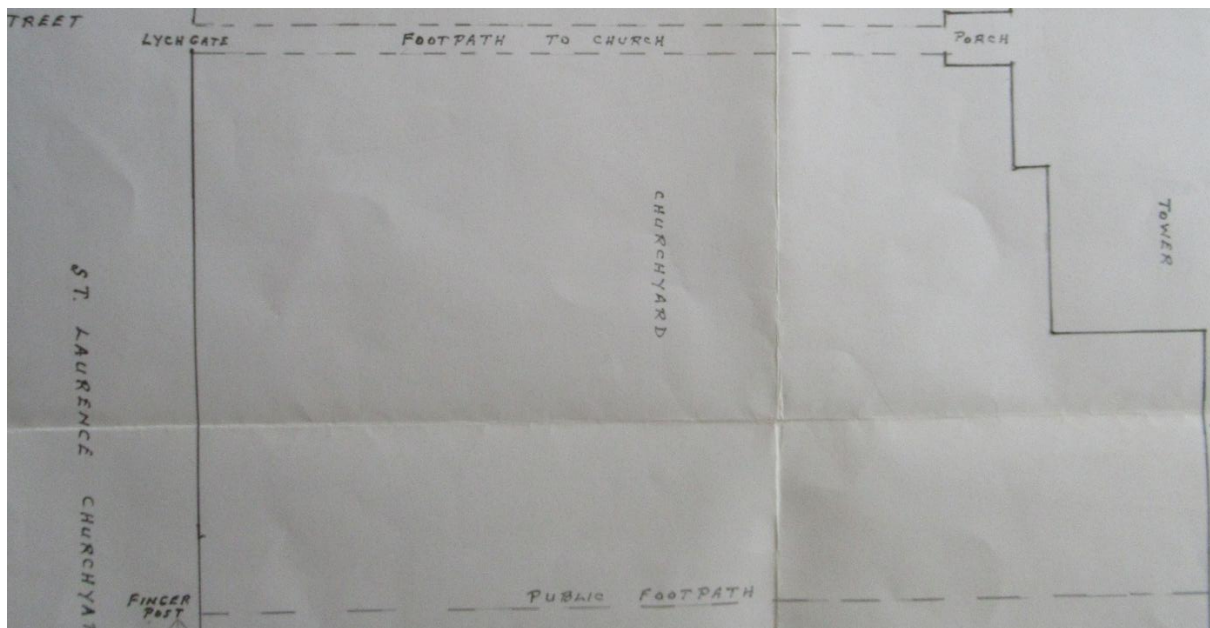


Figure 8: Zone Two



Figure 9: Flowerbed by Porch. Area 2A

Area 2A. Immediately by the porch next to the Marriage memorials (i.e., on the south side of the churchyard) there is a flower bed which contains phlox, hemerocallis, hedgewort, golden rod and dock, the latter being a weed.

Work has begun to tend this area which (as the photograph showed) looked colourful but untidy.



Figure 10: Yew tree in Zone Two (photographed in August 2025)

Area 2B. On the other side of the churchyard within Zone Two are the two horse chestnut trees subject to a Tree Preservation Order (see Appendix E). In October 2025 self-seeded ash saplings were observed at the base of one of these trees.

The adjacent yew tree reached the ground meaning that nothing was able to grow below it. Its skirt was addressed in the churchyard tidy in September

2025 but needs to be maintained (see Appendix F).

There is an ash tree beyond the fence line of the churchyard which has a bat box on it. The bat conservation authorities will be removing this box and placing it together with another box on a tree near the public footpath in late October 2025.

The fence line has a dilapidated gate, boarded fence then paling fence. Hawthorn and ivy grow along the fence.

A proposal to move the fence line to create improved (rather than more) parking space outside the churchyard on what is believed to be unadopted highway received in principle approval from the PCC in September 2025.

Removal of the fence line is not an eco-objective.

The proposal does not create additional car parking spaces, the current number of which is small in relation to attendees at Services and other church events. Visitors to the church park along Church Street itself, normally by the wall of Jericho Priory.

Within the churchyard to the right of the church path are six ledger stones whose inscriptions are now, as in 1997, unreadable (#35-#40). These were recorded by William Holman in 1719 when he was compiling his 'History of Essex': #35: Petchey, d.1713 & 1712; #36: Petchey, d.1707; #37: Pavlin daughter of Petchey, d.1707; #38: Baker, d.1712; #39: Baker, d.1704; #40: Baker, d.1713.⁵ These were recent interments during Holman's

⁵ #38 & #40 have skull and crossbones. Holman records the following on William Baker's gravestone (#39). Baker lived at Fingrith Hall.

"Here lyes ye ruines of a generous mind
In this dark cell to be confined
Stay reader stand and spend a teare
And thinke on me that now lyes here

time but of sufficient interest to him. Today the positioning of these ledger stones is difficult for large vehicular access when required. There is no proposal to move them.

Zone Three: West of Footpath

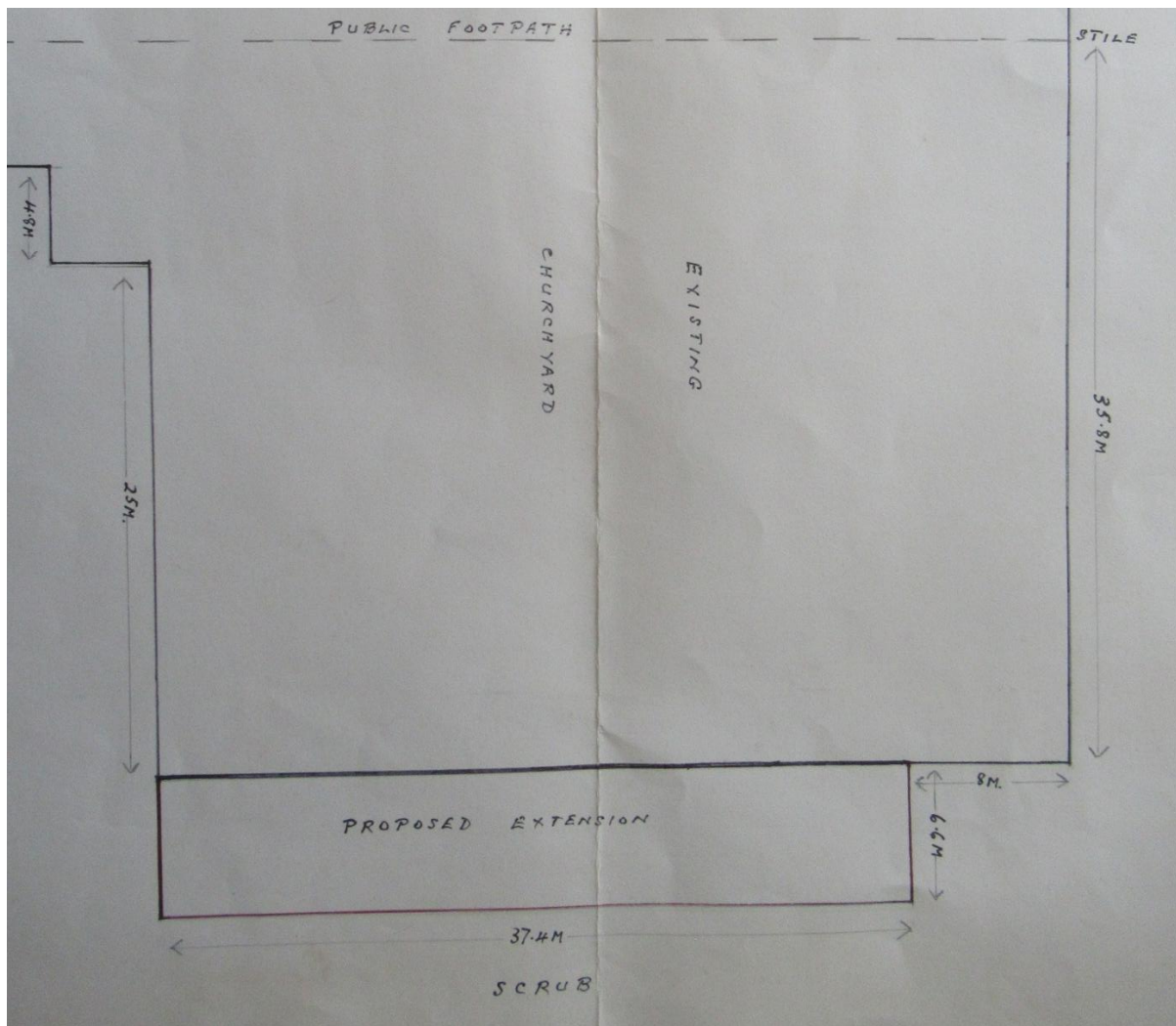


Figure 11: Zone Three

And whilst thou reads ye state of me
Think on ye glad ye runs for thee
In Christ alone I put my trust
To rise in judgment with ye just."



Figure 12: Old graves covered by bramble. Area 3A

Area 3A.

About 10 metres beyond the footpath on the south side there is an approximate 10 metres by 10 metres patch of brambles and wild roses. In August 2025 bramble has encroached within 50cms of the arch-topped grave to Wiltshire, who died from a wound sustained in the First World War (#162). This was trimmed on the churchyard tidy day.

The neighbouring grave, Collard (#161) has an ivy-clad tree stump immediately next to it (see Appendix G).

By the boundary is a small silver birch tree.

The following graves are covered in bramble with a self-seeded ash tree in the middle:

- Sherwood (#177) d. 1928
- Thorogood (#178) d.1934
- Wilson (#179) d. 1934 & 1953
- Partridge (#192) d. 1934, 1950, 1970 & 1982
- Meadows (#191) d. 1935, 1959

All these inscriptions were readable in 1997.

This area (3A) has been carefully considered by the Eco Church Group.

- There is no obligation for the parish to remove vegetation so that these graves may be seen.
- Removal of the bramble and trees in this area would be time-consuming, and costly if a contractor was engaged. The use of heavy machinery is undesirable because of the presence of headstones.
- Bramble is invasive so generally consideration should be given to halt its progress.
- “The tree surgeon that we used for the regenerative pruning by the East wall has recommended that where the bramble is invasive, he would use weed killer to destroy the roots and then cut it back. This can help to prevent recurrence. He has included this approach in his proposal that he gave to the Fabric Sub-committee as part of our nature trail clearance work.”

The use of herbicide (weed killer) is controversial because it artificially destroys plants and is a risk to wildlife. The Eco Church Group understand that only when plants flower – in this case bramble in July – can this be harmful to pollinators. Recognising the need to restore the churchyard back to an earlier dated position, to form a new baseline, using

weed killer on this occasion seems to be the only acceptable and cost-effective outcome. The Eco Church Group has amended its response to the 'Land and Nature' Survey (see Appendix A – Question 8).

Work to eradicate bramble to this area was completed in November 2025.

Area 3B

There is a gap beyond this point through which deer may come into the churchyard.



Figure 13: Gap between bramble where deer might enter?

Beyond the clump moving west the grave of Collins (#222) is bramble infested, and Livings (#220) is covered in bramble and has an ash tree growing hard by the grave. behind that Attridge (#223), d. 1953, and Brazier (#224), d. 1954 & 1955, are covered by bramble.

This area could be managed in the same way as above or the progress of bramble halted by continuous pruning.

Work to eradicate bramble to this area was completed in November 2025.

Area 3C

There is a precariously leaning silver birch tree at the southwest corner of the churchyard. The ground at its base is higher on one side and concern has been expressed that a gale-force prevailing wind might topple the specimen.



Figure 14: Large leaning silver birch within churchyard boundary

This tree will need monitoring and professional advice as to its maintenance or felling. An informal conversation has happened with a tree surgeon and estimate received within a basket of work (see Introduction).

The limb stretching over the churchyard was professionally lopped by tree surgeons in November 2025.

The south side of the churchyard is shadier, so adding a new bench there after Easter 2027 may be an option.

Area 3D



Figure 15: Area for log pile? Area 3D

There is a space behind the graves in the south-west corner of the churchyard (area 3D) which could be used to create a log pile.

Logs from the lopped tree were placed there in November 2025.

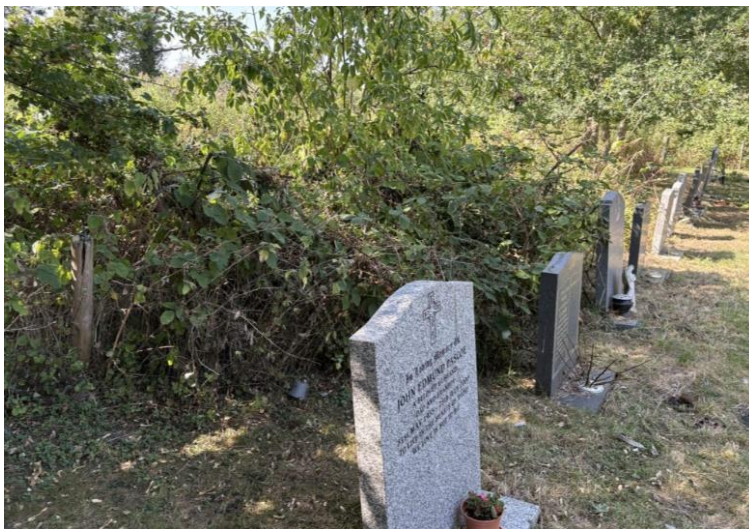


Figure 16: Bramble encroaching 1989 extension. Area 3E

Area 3E

On the western fringe of what is the 1989 extension to the churchyard brambles have grown over the fence to back of graves from Garner to Jeffreys (#unnumbered).

Between August and October 2025, a fencepost has fallen behind the grave to Fether (#unnumbered).

Area 3F

On the north side the Neame memorial bench (#242) offers no view across the churchyard due to overgrown buddleia with bramble within. There was a pleasant view from the seat across the churchyard in 2020.

In August 2025 there was thought to be no hidden graves within the overgrown buddleia but in October 2025, with less foliage, a grave to Godwin (#unnumbered), d. 1965 &



Figure 17: Invasive buddleia preventing view from bench. Area 3F

1992, was apparent, in line with Parish (#241), d. 1965. This highlights the age of the Monumental Inscriptions survey and its need to be updated.

This area needs cutting back to regain the view from the bench. [This was completed in November 2025, with pruning of the buddleia remaining to be done in spring 2026.](#)

Moving the bench could be an option but since it sits on a concrete base this could be costly, and buddleia grows on new wood (see Appendix H).

Removal of the concrete base to the bench alone could be an option but might be costly.

Nearby, bramble grows upwards into the trees with runners falling towards the ground which if contact is made will create new specimens. (On 22 October 2025 a runner was 'kicked out of the ground' by the Neame bench.) [This was addressed in November 2025.](#)

Area 3G



Figure 18: Footpath entrance

By the footpath entrance, the Hull graves (#150 & 151) are overgrown.

The Sutton grave (#149) is one of two Commonwealth War Graves memorial in the churchyard. Behind the grave to Monk (#153), a First World War victim, brambles touch the back of the grave. These needs managing to ensure bramble

does not overrun the war graves.

Work to eradicate bramble to this area was completed in November 2025.

Behind Monk are three graves towards the churchyard corner where just inside the fence corner is at least one huge ash tree (shedding its leaves in October). The headstones to Chapman and Tucker (#168 & #169), both d. 1906, have been damaged by the trees.

In the same alignment to the south the double grave to Mann (#166) there is a fine specimen of hawthorn growing out of it.



Figure 19: View of backs of graves.

On the opposite side of the path the back of five graves can be seen (#72-#76). Graves #72-#74 are partly covered in ivy.

The Monumental Inscriptions survey in 1997 recorded a tree in front of Sarah White (#73). This long-established holly tree is pushing the headstone backwards.

The adjacent grave is that of Thomas and James White (#74), d. 1891 & 1901, the latter

remembered as “resident Doctor”. James Robert White is commemorated in one of the windows in the south aisle of the church.

Apart from bramble removal this area could remain left to nature.

Work to eradicate bramble to this area was completed in November 2025.

Further along the footpath on the left (strictly in Zone 2) is a very tall ash tree with ivy growing up into its canopy and a fir tree, again ivy covered. The size of the ash has pushed a gravestone to one side in front of Shuttleworth (#111). Storm Benjamin on 23 October 2025 has dropped some small ash branches onto the footpath over Green (#113) and Richardson (#114).

Conclusion

The Assessment concludes that although the grass areas are well maintained, the other areas are increasingly encroached by brambles and self-seeded trees. The current voluntary time and effort whilst very much appreciated is not sufficient.

To bring the churchyard to a tidy status is a daunting prospect.

Action Plan (to Easter 2027)

Introduction

Who, what, when, where, why, how – “washing on a line” – are the elements of the good Plan. This Plan is incomplete in terms of identifying who will undertake the work assessed above.

Some can be done through voluntary effort: other work needs professional paid labour.

The NLHF grant included funding for a nature trail, and as noted earlier, this funding could be used to help in some one-off clearance and tree cutting work. Longer term, the Friends of St Laurence, Blackmore (FoSL) already pays for maintenance work in the churchyard and may well be amenable to paying more on a regular basis to help pro-actively manage the churchyard.

Zone One: East of Path to Church

It is recommended that:

- the entire zone is proactively managed on a monthly basis to remove self-seeded ash trees and bramble, both of which are very dominant species (detail in Appendix D).
- Area 1A. (1) The grass area to be planted with wildflowers, and daffodils engaging with the school (detail in Appendix C). (2) Engaging the Scout Association to erect bug hotels (see Appendix B).
- Area 1B. The regeneratively pruned area in August 2025 is monitored and undesirable specimens such as weed trees and bramble removed (see Appendix D).
- Area 1C. (1) Shed to cover area subject to planning permission. (2) Ivy is carefully removed from the two Twogood graves (see Appendix G)
- Area 1D. Self-seeded trees and brambles are removed to retain long grass.
- Area 1E. Stones along the soak away need to be sieved to clear weeds.

Zone Two: Between Church Path and Public Footpath

It is recommended that:

- Area 2A. The flowerbed by the porch is kept tidy with colourful plants.
- Area 2B. The skirt of the yew tree is cut back (see Appendix F).

Zone Three: West of Footpath

It is recommended that:

- Area 3A. The area of encroached bramble covering several graves is eradicated through the reluctant and professional use of strong weed killer (herbicide) to form a new baseline (see Appendix D). **Completed.**
- Area 3B. The area of encroached bramble covering unvisited graves is not allowed to grow but progress monitored and halted. **Completed.**
- Area 3C. Professional advice is sought regarding the precariously leaning silver birch tree, with a view to its removal by tree surgeons. **Completed – limb professionally lopped.**
- Area 3D. Should the silver birch or any other tree be felled, suitable logs are placed in this area. **Completed, subject to rearrangement of logs.**
- Area 3E. The progress of bramble along the fence line be halted and fence posts along the 1989 extension replaced as necessary.
- Area 3E. Buddleia to be regeneratively pruned in spring 2026, and every year, with bramble removed (see Appendix H). This could be done by a Churchyard Working Party. **Partly completed – bramble removed, buddleia to be pruned.**
- Area 3G. The progress of bramble towards war graves be halted but otherwise ivy is allowed to grow on long-time unvisited graves. **Completed.**

General actions

It is recommended that:

- Trees. Professional advice is received regarding the health of the trees in the churchyard and on its boundary. This would include:
 - trees lining the south side of the churchyard in Zone 3
 - the retention or otherwise of the horse chestnut (T5) subject to a Tree Preservation Order
 - additional to the horse chestnut tree, the removal of a large ash tree along the same fence line.
 - This could allow the creation of better car parking arrangements which has already received in principle support from the PCC. To proceed would be subject to separate PCC approval falling outside this Plan.
 - trees smothered with ivy.
- Gravestones and Monumental Inscriptions. The state of gravestones in the churchyard is assessed in further detail. This would include:
 - carefully removing ivy from historic examples (see Appendix G)
 - updating the Monumental Inscriptions plan from 1997 (to 2027)
 - ensuring leaning headstones are recorded and are safe.
- Citizen Science. The actions set out in Appendix I are pursued. This will include regular observation and assessment (patrolling), making recommendations to the PCC and taking action where already given in the Plan.

- People. The actions set out in Appendix J are pursued.
- Old Remembrance Garden. This Plan has been silent about the old remembrance garden surrounded by deer-attacked roses. This is a sensitive subject and warrants separate discussion and, perhaps as part of a consultation process, replanting as a dry garden.
- Publication. This Plan is made publicly available in hard copy and published online, subject to the redaction of costs and sensitive information. The approved Plan to be referred back to the Eco Church Group to approve redactions and publication.

A Prayer

Lord of creation,
Whose glory is around and within us:
Open our eyes to your wonders,
That we may serve you with reverence
And know your peace at our lives' end,
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Appendices

Appendix A: Eco Church Survey. Land & Nature Category

Land and Nature category

This category was considered by the Eco Church Group on 5 August 2025.⁶ The survey results shown below have informed the Churchyard Management Plan.

“When churches manage land for nature, be it land owned by the church or land in the local community, they reinforce the whole mission of the church by caring for creation and serving the community - increasing access to nature for human wellbeing, building climate resilience and pointing people towards our Creator God.

“There are two pathways through this survey category: Pathway 1: for churches which own or manage land such as a garden, churchyard or burial ground.”



	Question		Response: Where are we today?	Response: Where next (if at all)?
1	Pathway 1: for churches which own or manage land such as a garden, churchyard, or burial ground.			Yes
2	Commitment Our church recognises the significant contribution churches can make to the UK’s target of 30% of land protected for nature by 2030. We have established a plan to manage our land for nature to help us do this in the most impactful way.	a Yes b Partly c No	A	A
3	Our church encourages wildlife to flourish on our land by providing:	a bird boxes b bat boxes c bug hotels	ABC E G	ABC⁷ E G

⁶ [Land-and-nature-survey-questions.pdf \(arocha.org.uk\)](https://arocha.org.uk/land-and-nature-survey-questions.pdf) accessed 12 October 2024

⁷ These link with engagement with the Scout Association as part of the Tower Project (see Appendix B).

	Question		Response: Where are we today?	Response: Where next (if at all)?
	<i>Choose all that apply ...</i>	d hedgehog boxes e food for birds throughout the year f a pond or wetland area for wildlife g wild, scrubby area (e.g. nettles, brambles, weeds in paving) h log pile(s) i composting and mulching as appropriate j a source of water for wildlife all year round k other l no options for wildlife	H	H⁸
4	Our church manages mowing in a way that: <i>Choose all that apply ...</i>	a encourages the growth of wildflowers (no spring or summer mowing) b allows the growth of long grass (only mown every two to three years) c is good for grassland fungi (regular mowing and removing cut grass) d other e does not aim to improve our land for wildlife	E	A⁹
5	Our church is intentional about leaving 'untidy' areas during the autumn/winter that support over-wintering wildlife: <i>Choose all that apply ...</i>	a dead flowers and seed heads left in situ b flower beds and shrub areas left 'untidy' c leaf piles and branches left in situ d untidy areas e are not part of our plan	E	B
6	In the last year, our church has been actively engaged in planting and/or managing trees and/or hedgerows for wildlife on our land or in the local community. <i>Choose all that apply ...</i>	a We plant and/or manage trees or hedgerows on our land ¹⁰ b We help fund tree and/or hedgerow planting and management locally	D	D¹¹

⁸ Area 3D identified.

⁹ Creating a wildflower area is a project in which the local school can be engaged in a biodiversity project, and scores well towards an Eco Church Bronze Award (see Appendix C).

¹⁰ Managing trees could include the systematic removal of undesirable ash saplings.

¹¹ Where no further action is proposed this item will not be considered further.

	Question		Response: Where are we today?	Response: Where next (if at all)?
		c We volunteer in tree and/or hedgerow planting and management initiatives locally d We are not involved with tree and/or hedgerow planting and management		
7	Our church recognises that healthy soils are critical for the flourishing of biodiversity. Our church: <i>Choose all that apply ...</i>	a composts organic garden waste on site b does not use horticultural products that contain peat c uses no dig/mulching and/or other soil-friendly cultivation methods d does not do any of the above	B	B
8	Theme 2: Monitoring and citizen science. (See Appendix I) Our church avoids the use of synthetic fertilisers, pesticides, or herbicides:	a Always b Not always	B¹²	A
9	Our church monitors and reviews the impact our plan for nature is making for biodiversity.	a Yes b No	B	A
10	Our church undertakes citizen science activities including wildlife surveys on our land to monitor changes: <i>Choose all that apply ...</i>	a Big Garden Birdwatch b Big Butterfly Count c Churches Count on Nature regularly gather data and input it into a national database (e.g. iRecord/iNaturalist) d other e We don't do any citizen science activities	C	ABC
11	Our church engages with A Rocha UK's Target 25 (T25) or similar projects to help declining species, taxonomic groups, and habitats (on our own land or other land in the community, e.g. ARUK's Partners in Action) by: <i>Choose all that apply ...</i>	a promoting the project to church members b taking action on one or more T25 species, groups, or habitats (add details in comments) c supporting those working on T25 or similar (e.g. by volunteering) d At the moment, we are not contributing to T25	D	More information required in due course

¹² Acceptance of a proposal to use strong weed killer (herbicide) to eradicate bramble in certain areas, notably Area 3A, causes the Eco Church Group to amend this response.

	Question		Response: Where are we today?	Response: Where next (if at all)?
12	Theme 3: People (See Appendix J). Our church regularly takes part in a community litter pick/beach clean/river clean etc.	a Yes b No	B ¹³	A
13	Our church grows food on our site (including in planters, boxes etc.).	a Yes b No	B	B
14	Our church actively encourages people to access and enjoy our land by providing: <i>Choose all that apply ...</i>	a relevant interpretive material (e.g. nature display boards or leaflets) b benches/seats c a wildlife trail d a labyrinth e adaptations to improve accessibility (e.g. ramps, appropriate path surfaces, handrails, or braille signs) f ways to engage with, and facilitate access for, people who are statistically less likely to access nature g other h We have yet to take any action to improve accessibility to our land	B E	A ¹⁴ B C ¹⁵ E ¹⁶ F
15	Our church actively encourages church members and volunteers to nurture and protect our land by: <i>Choose all that apply ...</i>	a caring for it, for example by gardening b identifying the wildlife that is there and submitting records to, for example, iRecord or iNaturalist c other d We aren't yet involving people in looking after our land or monitoring its wildlife	A	A
16	Our church is planning and acting for land-based climate resilience through: <i>Choose all that apply ...</i>	a protecting the soil by mulching, composting, and using natural manures during periods of drought b creating shaded areas	F	A B C ¹⁷

¹³ Members do this in a personal capacity, but this is not promoted by the church.

¹⁴ The school is committed to support the development of interpretation boards relevant to the bell tower, but this theme could be widened to include the churchyard.

¹⁵ Designing a nature trail is a specific activity involving the Scout Association (see Appendix B).

¹⁶ Resurfacing the main path and improving lighting has been identified (see Appendix B).

¹⁷ Proposals include capturing water from downpipes in tanks.

	Question		Response: Where are we today?	Response: Where next (if at all)?
		c rainwater management (e.g. by using water butts and creating rain gardens and swales [shallow channels]) d creating wet mud patches to help birds that need mud for their nests (e.g. house martins and swallows) e other f We have not yet taken any action for land-based climate resilience		

Appendix B: Churchyard projects funded through National Heritage Lottery Funding

In 2025 the famous bell tower was renovated thanks to a significant grant from the NHLF. Grant awarding conditions include encouraging visitors to marvel at its spectacular construction and support projects in its immediate environment.

The grant application included the following projects relevant to the churchyard which, as this Plan is being published, is being overseen by “auditors” for the NHLF. The Tower Project Team were advised that environmental work engaging young people would be particularly creditworthy and so actively worked with the local primary school and Scout Association.

Projects in the NHLF application made in April 2024 are as follows:

- “Engage with School (200 children) to develop educational aids to support KS1 and KS2 resources for history and environmental elements of the national curriculum.”
 - The school has an interest in biodiversity projects and has its own pupils’ Eco Group. Linking this Plan to the work of the school will have positive community benefit.
- “Engage with Scouts Association (100 children) to create a nature trail around the Church that supports them in their Community Impact badge work. Using the Bell Tower as the hub, develop programmes of activity that the Beavers, Cubs and Scouts can use to participate in areas such as bellringing, local history, photography and art.”
 - The nature trail could include signs linking to QR codes.
 - Building bird and bat boxes

- Bat boxes are being installed by the bat conservation group who have liaised on the renovation of the bell tower. The tower itself has false tiles allowing ingress and egress of bats. Additional bat boxes could be built by youth organisations.
- Bird boxes have not been discussed in the Plan: one is in storage having been donated by the Ongar Guides, the siting of which needs to be established.
- The Tower Project Team has suggested planting a commemorative tree to mark the completion of the renovation work and could include burial of a time capsule.
 - The location and suitable tree specimen will need to be decided and approved by PCC if this was to proceed.
- Provide a shed in the churchyard enabling stored items in the Tower to be relocated subject to planning permission. (Refer to Area 1C.)
- Resurface main church path and improve lighting.

Specifically, in response to the question, “How your project will protect the environment”, the following commitments were made.

“The project will be implemented in a sustainable way, with all building work focused on restoring the historic wooden Tower and Lychgate to their former glory and protecting the 14th C timber frame underneath. The building work specifications include the most up-to-date level of sustainability requirements for the efficient use of electricity and also to minimise the impact on the local wildlife and their habitat during the works. By restoring the wooden Tower, it will enable bat species that live in the Tower to thrive and offset some of the habitat loss that is occurring locally due to the increase in housebuilding that is taking place. Funding from the National Lottery will be used to enable the Scouts Association to help design a nature trail around the Church and build bird and bat boxes as well as insect hotels. These activities will enhance the environment around the church for the wildlife in the area (birds, bats, owls, insects, deer and badgers) and the nature (plants, trees, flowers) by providing additional shelter for them as well improving the awareness and knowledge of this area within the community and its young people. The funding will also be used to create educational resources to help children at KS1 and KS2 connect with the environmental aspects of the national curriculum.”

Appendix C: Creating a Wildflower Area etc (Zone 1A)



Figure 20: Zone 1A. As shown here the grassed area to the right of lychgate to become wildflowers, with remainder planted with daffodils by schoolchildren and call The Easter Garden. Photographed 3 November 2025

Introduction

This 90m² area has been identified to begin the creation of a wildflower area behind the hedge (13m²) with the remainder allocated to growing spring bulbs such as daffodils in the area in front of the wall (77m²). If the latter is planted late autumn 2025 there will be a spring display around Easter.

We propose that local schoolchildren plant daffodils.

Calling the daffodil area an Easter Garden has particular appeal and could be used in the telling of the account of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection.

Wildflower area

The area identified for wildflower seed planting has within it a large grave, concrete posts and concrete bases, so difficult to mow. Grass, ash tree saplings and bramble appear to be dominant species in the churchyard so to create a wildflower garden these need to be eradicated.

The ground needs to be prepared before planting, with grass agitated to reveal bare soil.

Yellow rattle is a wildflower which outcompetes grass so needs to be sown in March.

The National Trust sells seed bombs which can be started at the same time. These contain corn marigold, poppy, greater knapweed, sheep sorrel, wild carrot, birdsfoot trefoil, tufted vetch, self heal and yellow rattle. An Eye-Spy book of Wildflowers identifies species.

A pack of 100 seed bombs costs about £12.00 and will cover 5m². These seeds have been donated for the trial.

It should be noted that, unlike bulb planting, the creation of a wildflower area will take time.¹⁸

Specific action plan:

Where	Area 1A: a space of approximately 13m ² immediately behind the fence by the lychgate
Why	High impact, low maintenance area, attractive to pollinators. Once established the area would require cutting back in August annually.
What	Wildflower area
When	The project will begin in Spring 2026 with the planting of wildflowers, specifically yellow rattle to eradicate grass.
How	Scattering seed bombs and planting yellow rattle seedlings
Who	A church member will lead this project

Spring bulbs

Kew Gardens lists the following as UK native spring bulbs: daffodils, wood anemones, snakeshead fritillary, ransoms, lesser celandine, bluebells.

One species would have a greater impact.

Planting bulbs in the late autumn at a depth of twice the size of the bulb will produce flowers the following spring.¹⁹

To carpet bed the area between 15 and 25 daffodil bulbs would need to be planted per square metre. This would require around 1050 bulbs.²⁰

This is probably not the desired outcome and planting over 1000 bulbs would be too daunting for the school community. Buying a very large bag of around 360 bulbs and scattering (“broadcasting”) these across the area creates a naturalistic effect. Planting where bulbs fell would offer a more enjoyable experience to the schoolchildren.

The cost of the bulbs with next-day delivery is around £45. The cost will be met from the NHLF grant.

On ‘Gardeners World’ (BBC Two: 31 October 2025), Monty Don demonstrated bulb planting using a ‘long-armed bulb planter’. Church members have found this garden implement lurking in their potting sheds and have lent these for use.

The wall belongs to the owner of Jericho Priory.

¹⁸ Further reading in this A Rocha resource: [5ff1c7bc-d7f8-4da3-91ab-96e8847bc38c_Land4 Native Wildflowers.pdf](#) accessed 15 October 2025

¹⁹ For more detail see [UK native spring bulbs | Grow Wild | Kew](#) (accessed 14 October 2025)

²⁰ Source: [What's The Optimal Number Of Daffodil Bulbs For Each Square Metre? | ShunCy](#) (accessed 14 October 2025)

Specific action plan:

Where	Area 1A: a space of approximately 77m ² on grassed area between proposed wildflower area and shrubs (area 1B)
Why	Through engagement with the school, as part of the Tower Project, it is hoped that pupils and their families will have a greater appreciation of nature in the churchyard. Daffodils are high visual impact plants and pollinators. Daffodils are low maintenance requiring optional deadheading at the end of the season to help improve future flowering. The area would remain unmown until at least May annually.
What	Daffodil area designated to School and called 'The Easter Garden'
When	A PCC decision on 12 November 2025 is essential for the project to commence to enable flowering in spring 2026. Bulbs would need to be planted during November, at the latest Christmas 2025 to guarantee some form of display
How	The Digital Lead of the Tower Project Team who is also a member of the Eco Church Group is in conversation with the Deputy Headteacher at the school and will make arrangements for schoolchildren to visit the churchyard as a group(s) or class(es) on a single day. Children will scatter bulbs and use garden implements under adult supervision to plant in the designated area. Long handled bulb planters have been borrowed from members of the congregation. A Risk Assessment will be completed.
Who	Members of the Eco Church Group are prepared to support the work through engagement with teacher led schoolchildren and getting their hands dirty in assisting with planting. All members identified from the Eco Church Group have had the relevant DBS checks.

Appendix D: Space invaders. Dealing with self-seeded ash saplings and brambles

Weed trees

Trees are important for carbon capture but need to be managed.

Self-seeded ash trees (or “weed trees”) grow at an alarming rate so where these are not required need to remove almost upon discovery before the roots take hold.

Self-seeded ash trees can grow quickly under optimal conditions. Here are some key points:

- **Annual Growth:** Most ash trees grow between **18 to 25 feet per year**. [↪ 1](#)
- **Germination Time:** It can take about **18 months** for ash seeds to germinate. [↪ 1](#)
- **Maturity:** Generally, it takes about **3 to 15 years** for an ash tree to reach maturity. [↪ 1](#)

These factors contribute to the overall growth rate of self-seeded ash trees.

[↪ 3 Sources](#)

Bramble

The Woodland Trust describes bramble (Latin name: *Rubus fruticosus*) as “hardy and determined the bramble uses powerful roots to grow rapidly in almost any environment.” With a lengthening growing season due to climate change marked by warmer summers and wetter winters, bramble is a space invader.

Like ash trees there is plenty of bramble outside the churchyard so its control should not be a concern. Its removal is challenging, and cuttings should not be composted because it will survive and could be unwittingly spread in mulching.

Professional work people are permitted to use strong weed killer as a method of eradicating bramble. This has been contemplated in this plan as a one-off occurrence.

Bramble flowers in July attract bees and butterflies. Birds feast on the fruit. Within an hour on 13 August 2025 600g of blackberries were picked within immediately reaching distance.

We need to encourage foraging.

Illustration relevant to Appendix J (page 36)



We want to encourage people to access and enjoy our land by providing relevant interpretive material. Illustrated here is a board erected by a local farmer on a public footpath crossing his land. We could do the same whenever the churchyard appearance changes.

We might also have a changing display on a Notice Board or more permanent interpretation serving as a nature trail.

Appendix E: Tree Preservation Orders

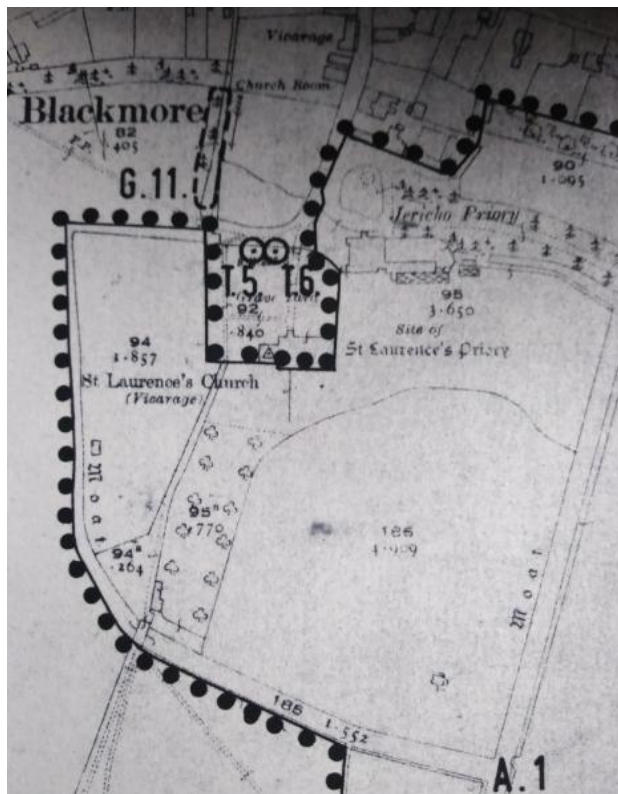


Figure 21: Tree Preservation Order

Tree Preservation Orders were placed on the two horse chestnut trees in the 1960s marked T5 and T6 on the original map.

Tree T5 is said to be in poor condition and may need removing for health and safety reasons. An informal estimate for this work has been received (see Introduction). It is essential that if the tree is to be felled that a professional report is received in writing and permission granted by the local Council concerning the removal of the TPO. This must be done with PCC approval as quotes are received.

Conkers give much pleasure to visitors. There is a tradition of placing conkers along the lychgate walls. In October 2025 four ladies of riper than teenage years

gleefully collected 99 conkers to be used in for craft work by the village Friday Club.

No other TPOs are recorded.

Prior to 1989 the total space occupied by church and churchyard was 0.84 acres – which explains why in God's acre we have a lack of graveyard space.

Appendix F: It's all about yew (*Taxus baccata*)

Although not ancient this is a special tree in the churchyard and, other than dealing with its skirt from time to time should not be amateurly pruned but left to professional tree surgeons. For example, some dying areas of a yew can regenerate.

“Keep the ground clear beneath a yew, removing railings, grass cutting piles and shrubs like holly, elder or hazel. One of the best things you can do is to mulch under yew trees. Use wood chip or leaf mulch and spread it canopy wide. Make sure that the mulch is not touching the trunk, however. Mulch can be a few inches thick, replenish it every few years. Never fill the cavity of a veteran yew with rubbish, grass cuttings or use it as a storage space.”²¹

²¹ Extract from Eco Church leaflet A5 – Yews and Other Veteran Trees (downloaded 25 August 2025)

Appendix G: Getting to know Ivy

Ivy (Latin: Hedera) is a clinging plant so observed on trees, fence lines and gravestones. It has the following advantages and disadvantages.

Here are the **advantages and disadvantages of ivy**:

Advantages:

- **Aesthetic Appeal:** Ivy provides a classic and timeless look to buildings, enhancing their charm and beauty.  1
- **Natural Insulation:** Ivy can help regulate indoor temperatures by shading walls and providing an additional layer of insulation.  2
- **Protection from Weathering:** The foliage acts as a barrier, shielding the exterior from direct exposure to rain, wind, and sunlight.  2

Disadvantages:

- **Invasive Growth:** Ivy can spread rapidly and outcompete other plants, leading to overgrowth and potential damage to structures.  2
 - **Pest Attraction:** The dense growth can create habitats for pests, necessitating proactive pest control.  2
 - **Structural Damage:** Ivy can damage wooden fences and walls if not properly managed, potentially leading to costly repairs.  2
- These points provide a balanced view of the pros and cons of ivy, helping you make an informed decision.



As a clinging plant with hooks, ivy must never be pulled off of gravestones because the stone itself will shale. Ivy needs to be cut at the base, allowed to die then carefully removed.

Appendix H: Is buddleia a buddy or bully?

Buddleia is known as the butterfly plant because its purple panicle shaped flowers attract the species in the summer, particularly in August where it is abundant on waste ground for example by railway tracks.

It is drought resistant so does not need watering: but invasive if not managed.

Buddleia flowers of newer branches which means the shrub will grow larger if unchecked but not produce abundant flowers.

The shrub needs to be pruned by cutting the stems to a height of around 60cms (2 feet) from the ground annually in February but no later than mid-April.²²

Appendix I: Monitoring and Citizen Science

Producing a Plan encourages people to consciously engage with “God’s Acre”. This includes ongoing observation and assessment (patrolling), recommendations to PCC for action, and taking action where that has been given.

The Eco Church survey (Appendix A) includes a number of projects. The Group has identified the following “Next Steps”.

- To participate in the following surveys: Big Garden Birdwatch, Big Butterfly Count, Churches Count on Nature regularly gather data and input it into a national database (e.g. iRecord/iNaturalist) to learn and understand the impact the Plan has on biodiversity) (Question 10)
 - Engaging with the school in these surveys has been suggested and, over time, the Scout Association
- To monitor and review the impact our plan for nature is making for biodiversity (Question 9)

Appendix J: People

Linked to the Eco Church survey and Eco Church Group (Appendix A) is the work of the Tower Project Team using NHLF money (Appendix B) to deliver a number of achievable actions over the lifetime of this Plan.

- We are encouraging people (particularly young people through engagement with the local Primary School and Scout Association) to access and enjoy our land by providing relevant interpretive material (e.g. nature display boards or leaflets) and nature trail (Question 14)
 - Information can be temporary – “what is happening here?” – or longer term but flexible with QR links to the church website (see page 33).
- In addition, our work on the entrance pathway and lighting will improve the visitor experience: adaptations to improve accessibility (e.g. ramps, appropriate path surfaces, handrails, or braille signs) (Question 14)
- Encouraging the congregation to participate in community litter pick whilst ensuring that the churchyard is litter (and plastic) free (Question 12)

Finally, the Eco Church Group is thinking about rainwater management and providing shaded areas – although the church building itself is a cool place to be – so are projects to consider in the next iteration of the Plan post Easter 2027 (Question 16).

²² Source: [How to grow buddlejas / RHS](#) accessed 15 October 2025

Appendix K: Millennium Garden Plan

